



AMY ADAMS IN NOCTURNAL ANIMALS

PAPER CUTS

A novelist takes revenge in director Tom Ford's pretty but vacant new film *Nocturnal Animals*

Tom Ford's second feature, *Nocturnal Animals*, is a movie within a movie, and while both are lushly attractive, full of precise light and deep reds, neither is very good.

Ford, who is more famous as a fashion designer, has an eye for a certain kind of pristine, art-directed beauty — an eye that served him well in 2009's *A Single Man*, the film that made me take Colin Firth much more seriously. But no one in *Animals* can bring the same soul to the movie's multiple narratives.

Susan (Amy Adams) is a Los Angeles gallery owner too unhappy to relax into the world she's built with her handsomely bland husband, Hutton (Armie Hammer). Wealth and passivity come easily to her; when she gets a paper cut opening an unexpected package, her household staff finishes the task.

In the package is a copy of her ex-husband Edward's new novel, *Nocturnal Animals*, which is dedicated to Susan. As she begins to read, the movie becomes the novel, a well-worn tale of violence and revenge about Tony (Jake Gyllenhaal), whose family encounters a trio of West Texas hoodlums.

Ford finds beauty in the hot desert light, as Gyllenhaal takes long baths and Michael Shannon steals scenes as a morally iffy detective. The film continually cuts to Susan, who's a stunningly dramatic reader, always dropping the manuscript or gasping. As she reads, the movie adds a third timeline: the story of Susan and Edward (also Gyllenhaal) as young, not-yet-successful New Yorkers.

It's clear that Edward has not written anything like this book before; it's also clear that he never took Susan's advice to write about something other than himself. Through Tony's story, Edward indicts Susan as the architect of both of their unhappiness. Her parallel character isn't Laura, the fictional wife, played by Adams lookalike Isla Fisher; Susan is the threat, the wild-eyed predators who drive Tony's family off the road in the night.

If you are inclined to be very, very generous, to overlook the clichés and heavy-handed mirroring between narratives, you might be able to view Ford's film (based on a novel by Austin Wright) as something of a perspective on toxic masculinity. This would be easier if Susan had more to do than react to Tony's, and by extension Edward's, tale — a tale that appears to end when Edward, having concluded his revenge fantasy, finally exhausts his need to turn Susan's emotions to his own ends.

There are bright spots in *Nocturnal Animals*, including too-brief appearances from Jena Malone and Michael Sheen. Adams, in heavy eyeliner, stares compellingly into the distance as her ex's fiction makes her question all of her choices, but it's hard to get past the way Tony, and by extension Edward, appropriates everyone else's pain as his own. Is it a commentary on novelists? On art people who no longer connect to art? Or just an excuse to make two films at once, and let Amy Adams sprawl on expensive couches for a spell?

As shallow as it is pretty, *Nocturnal Animals* seems to have misplaced its heart. Perhaps it's stuffed in one of the closets in Susan's house, put there by a butler who saw no pressing need for such a thing. (*Broadway Metro*)

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ALLIED (DIG) (R)
12:15, 3:45, 7:00, 10:00

ARRIVAL (DIG) (PG-13)
10:55, 1:45, 4:35, 7:30, 10:20

BAD SANTA 2 (DIG) (R)
11:35, 2:15, 5:00, 7:40, 10:10

DOCTOR STRANGE (DIG) (PG-13)
11:05, 1:55, 4:45, 7:35, 10:25

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM (DIG) (PG-13)
11:55, 4:05, 7:20, 10:30

INCARNATE (DIG) (PG-13)
12:05, 2:35, 5:05, 7:45, 10:15

MOANA (3D) (PG)
SPECIAL EVENT PRICING:
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10:05

MOANA (DIG) (PG)
10:45, 1:35, 4:25, 7:10

OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY (DIG) (R)
11:15, 2:05, 4:40, 7:15, 9:50

TROLLS (DIG) (PG)
11:25, 2:25, 4:55, 7:25, 9:55

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IMAX: FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM (CC, PG-13) ★ Fri. - Sat. 6:25 PM
IMAX: FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM 3D (PG-13) ★ Fri. - Sat. 3:15 PM 9:40 PM
HS16: NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION (PG-13) Sat. 12:00 PM
OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1130 215) 500 745 1030
INCARNATE (PG-13) Fri. (1200 225) 450 710 940 Sat. (225) 450 710 940
ALLIED (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1250) 405 700 1005
BAD SANTA 2 (CC) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1220 245) 510 735 1000
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MOANA 3D (CC,DV) (PG) ★ Fri. - Sat. (1120 AM 225 PM)
EDGE OF SEVENTEEN (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1250 330) 610 1035
FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (1100 110) 420 730 830
FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM 3D (CC,DV) (PG-13) ★ Fri. - Sat. (205 PM) 520 PM 1035 PM
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DOCTOR STRANGE (CC,DV) (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (100 355) 650 950
DOCTOR STRANGE 3D (CC,DV) (PG-13) ★ Fri. - Sat. 5:30 PM 8:20 PM
HACKSAW RIDGE (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1110 235) 550 910
TROLLS (CC,DV) (PG) Fri. - Sat. (1230 305) 535 805 850
THE ACCOUNTANT (CC,DV) (R) Fri. - Sat. (1140 250) 600 820

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DAILY 11:45 2:20 5:00 7:40 10:10

MOONLIGHT
DAILY 11:45 2:15 4:45 7:15 9:35

THE HANDMAIDEN (AH-GA-SS)
FRI-TUE 2:45 8:25
WED 2:45
THU 2:45 8:25

A MAN CALLED OVE (EN MAN SOM HETER OVE)
FRI 12:10 2:20 5:50 7:20
SAT 2:20 5:50 7:20
SUN-TUE 12:10 2:20 5:50 7:20
WED 12:10 2:20 7:20
THU 12:10 2:20 5:50

HUNT FOR THE WILDERPEOPLE
FRI-WED 12:00 5:00 9:45
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